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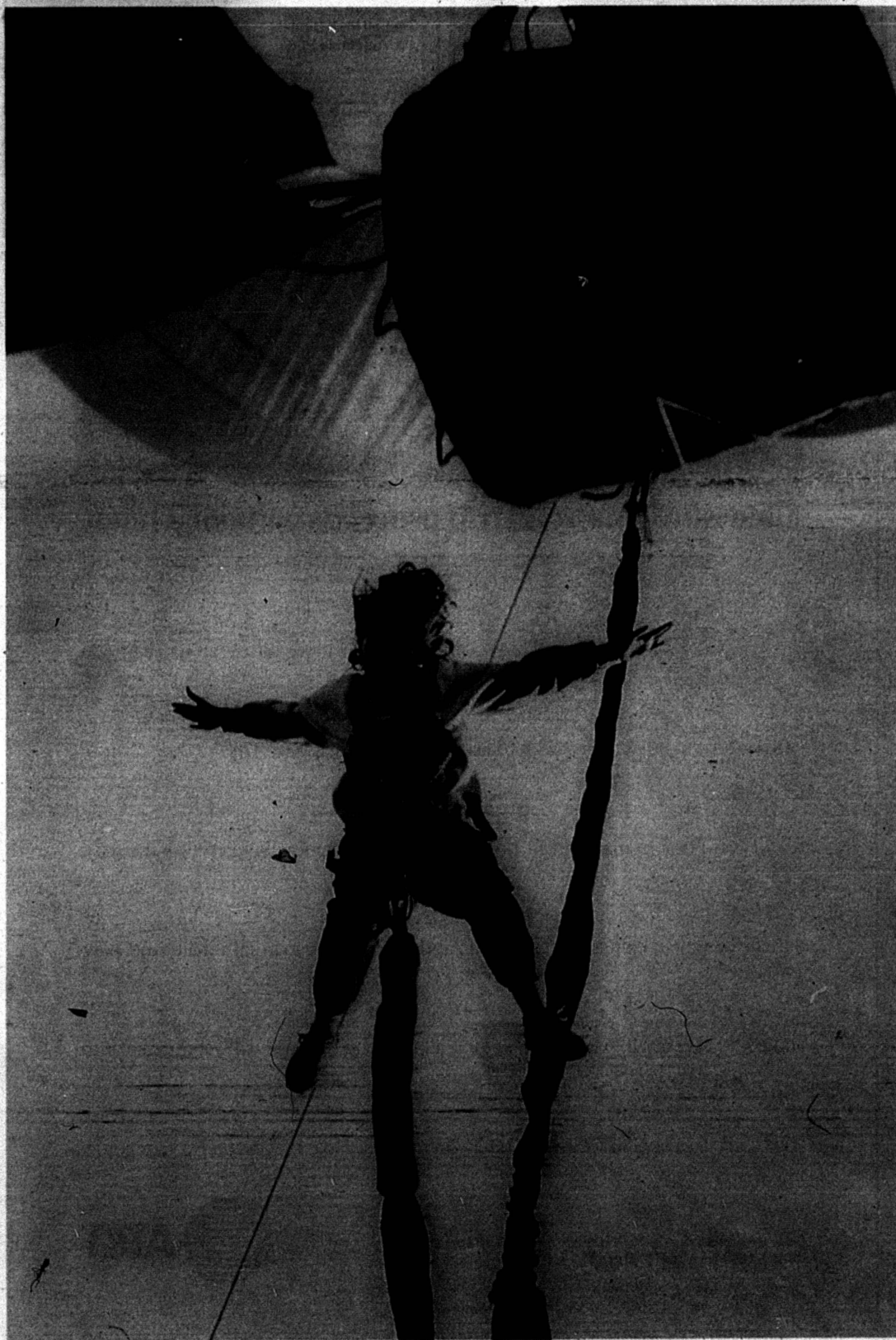
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MAG

March 1992

Wishing

fiction by
Jeremy Broda



AYIEEEEE!



J.D. Busser
Editor

20 20 20

Steve Smart

Photo Editor. He also has
a new-found respect for
bungee cords

20 20 20

THREE Wishing

"It's so dark here.

Silent. I can't see or hear
anything... and I'm not
too sure that there's
anything to see or anything
to hear."

Fiction by Jeremy
Broda

FOUR DIARY OF A BUNGEE JUMPER

"The weight of the
bungee cord wasn't as
noticeable anymore. The
150 feet below me were
more obvious. 'Go ahead
and jump.' One hundred
and fifty feet."

By Tanya Bricking

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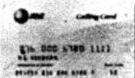
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


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Wishing

Fiction by

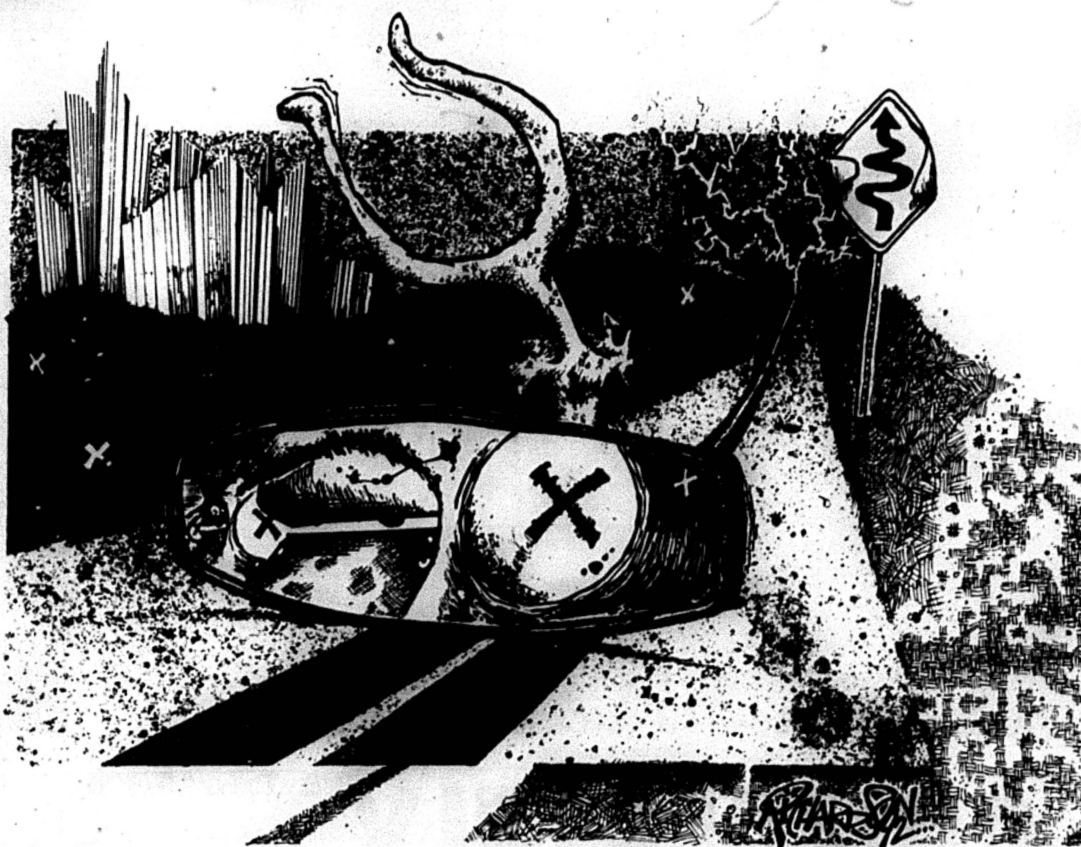
Jeremy Broda

I don't really remember much. No. No. I don't remember much at all. I just don't... remember.

It's so dark here. Silent. I can't see or hear anything... and I'm not too sure that there's anything to see or anything to hear. Where am I? Why can't I remember?

I got stranded once when I was driving up to the city. My battery went dead and left me in the middle of nowhere. It was 2 a.m. and the sky was black, and after a while even my emergency flashers went dead.

Damn, it was dark that night. I just sat in my car, my little car. I was scared, too. I thought I was over my fear of the dark till that night. I guess I regressed, because I was on the verge of tears. Then the rain started. I was relieved; it was kind of a natural reality check. But when the first bolt of lightning cracked the sky, I nearly peed in my pants. Well, I was relieved, but it scared me senseless. Then I laughed. I knew everything was going to be OK... as soon as daylight came. In the end, it— Old Scottsville Road. That's where I was. Me and my little car. I love those curves. I hit Peachtree Lane and then took a right—man, that road was something. I usually can't do over 40 on the curves, and even that's with the tires screeching and whining. Anyway, I was going into Scottsville to see my buddy Ritchie and meet his wife, and right



there at that Mom and Pop diner—

I ate there once. The food there is really good, better than home. Ain't that a shame? I have to go to a restaurant to get a home-cooked supper.

There was a truck there. In the curve, I mean. His flashers were on, so his battery wasn't his problem. Maybe he had a flat. Maybe it overheated. Hell, what does that matter? He was there in the curve, halfway in the road and...

Why is it so dark? I feel trapped inside a refrigerator, and I'm choking, suffocating, but I can breathe fine (I think). I'm suffocating to see, or to hear, anything. Why can't I see?

A black Ford with its blinkers blinking. I remember when I was a kid—about 8 or 9—I used to say to my mom, "I wish I was older so I could drive."

She'd say back, "Don't wish your life away, kiddo. Your childhood'll be gone before you know it, and then—" And then she'd shut up. I'm not sure what she—

Wait a minute. That black truck. He was halfway in my lane. I usually literally slide around that curve. There was a driveway there. Why didn't he pull into it? I think there was a driveway there.

Momma, what'd you mean?

My God. Oh, my God. I think I know why it's so dark. I—no. No. No. Not that.

Damn it! Why is there this nothingness? Why can I not see? Why am I deaf? Why can't I feel the air upon my skin? Why isn't my face itching, when I haven't shaved in several days? Why don't I feel like I exist?

That couldn't have been more than a couple of hours ago. I am supposed to meet Ritchie at 8 o'clock at Pizza Hut, and

I hit that tr—no. No.

Why am I so alone? I feel surrounded by a vast, desolate, black desert, and I feel like I'm surrounded by nothing at all. Why? Where am I?

I can't remember. I had to have hit that truck.

I know I hit—no. No. Yes. Yes. I did, too. There's no sense trying to deny something I know happened. But why can't I remember?

Is it true that a soldier never hears the shot that kills him? A buddy of mine told me that once, and

No. No. Please, God, no.

I am hearing, aren't I? I'm talking. It can't all be that bad. This darkness ain't that empty. Hey, I can

But I'm not talking. My mouth isn't mov—Where is my mouth? Why can't I feel my body? Why can't I?

I nailed that blasted truck. I had to have. Just like a damn Ford to break down and kill somebo

Did I say...

Am I. Am I... dead? No. No. No. Momma, what'd you mean? What am I gonna do? What can I do? I'm—ain't no friggin' way.

You know, I just realized something. I'm not talking. I can't be. I'm not hearing myself through my ears. The sound is in my mind. I must be thinking. That's it. Yeah. Isn't it?

Whew. What a relief. I'm just thinking. But why is it so dark?

I keep thinking about what my mom used to say, about not wishing my life away.

I'm not breathing. I'm deaf. I'm blind. I'm numb. I'm numb. Why can I not feel anything? Why is it so dark? Lonely?

I must be dead. I am d.

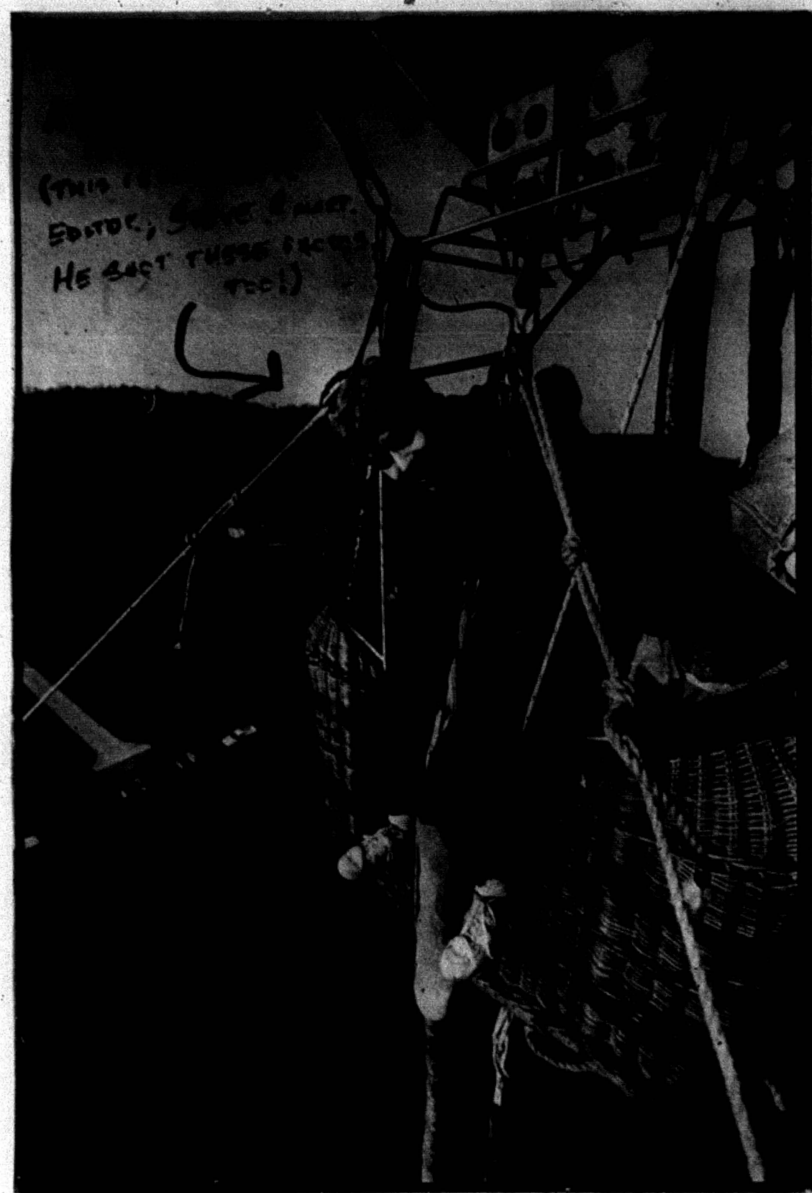
I never meant to wish my life away. I never meant to. I never wanted to, really; I just never realized how precious time is, and how important everything is.

What do I have to show for myself? I can't even... One faded childhood memory blurs into the next, like a chain of wet newspaper clippings. All the images meant something once, but now their significance is lost, and I'm... nowhere.

Jeez, Mom. You said not to wish my life away, 'cause once it was gone I'd want it back. Is that it?

[Continued on Page 7]

Anatomy of a jump



①
②

FIRST TIMERS
TAKE NOTE:
JUMP
HEAD
FIRST!

BUNGEE
CORD!
YOU NEED
THIS!



③
NOTICE LOOK
OF CONFESSION
ON PILOT'S
FACE

FINALLY,
JUMP CLEAK.
& ENJOY THE
RIDE!



COMPLETELY FREE AND SCARED WITLESS

By Tanya "Sky" Bricking

NASHVILLE — I was perched on the edge of a balloon basket, and the ground was a long way down. Soon, my feet wouldn't be supported by wicker — or anything else.

This wasn't the way I wanted to die.

I told myself I wasn't afraid.

I was lying.

It was windy, and the balloon pilot seemed worried about stabilizing his craft at 150 feet. I thought of what would happen if the wind made the balloon fall 50 feet at the moment I jumped. The bungee cord would stretch too far to leave me dangling.

I hoped I'd be cremated.

The pilot spoke between roars of a flame that heated the balloon. "It's a windy day, that's all there is to it."

I could hear him, but I couldn't see his face. He was behind me, along with two others, and I was looking down — watching the distance grow between us and the ground.

Wind had never frightened me, but when it became the force that controlled my fate, I wished it would go away.

The thought of plunging toward a grassy field — only to dangle from a giant rubber band and recoil skyward — seemed to be a thrilling idea when I agreed to do it. Now it was too late to back out.

"We'll just have to wait until we get stable," the pilot said, still concerned about the wind. He was talking to me now. "So when I say 'jump,'" he said, "you better be ready."

The balloon was tethered at 150 feet. A climbing harness around my legs and waist and another harness around my upper torso secured me to the bungee cord that was attached to the balloon. The cord — a wrist-thick bundle of latex strands — was 50 feet long and would stretch 40 or 50 more feet.

When I asked whether anyone had ever gotten hurt, the pilot joked that they had "made a lot of improvements since the first few guys got killed." I didn't find that so funny. But more seriously, he said most injuries were minor finger or wrist sprains which happened when the jumpers instinctively grabbed at their cords.

I decided not to grab the cord. I kept my hands tightly gripping the gondola as I waited. The weight of the bungee cord wasn't as noticeable anymore.

The 150 feet below me were more obvious. "Go ahead and jump."

One hundred and fifty feet.

My curiosity overtook my rational senses as I let go. I wanted to know what it felt like to bungee jump.

It felt like pure terror, mostly. You know those falling dreams? That's the feeling.

I was screaming, and it looked as though the sky were a moving blur. After about two seconds — which seemed more like two hours — the bungee cord stretched taut, seemingly just shy of the ground. It snapped back up and pulled me with it in a series of gradually diminishing bounces.

The panic was over when I realized I wasn't going to smack the ground and die.

I felt a sublime rush that seemed to last much longer than the few seconds it took to put my body in great danger. It was a sensation of conquering a fear, and it made me want to jump again — only better.

Then I became aware that people were watching me. "How was it?" someone yelled from the ground. "Hang upside down," a child urged. "Can you talk?" the pilot shouted from above.

They were glad to see that I was OK.

Bungee jumping is a social event. People watch from their driveways. Others pull over to the side of the road. Some put out playpens for their kids, pull out blankets and sit down for some entertainment. Yuppies get out their car phones and tell their friends what's going on. Some bring coolers full of refreshments. It's a free show — what a great thing during a recession.

Not to mention a great metaphor — Ed.

As soon as the balloon lowered me to the ground, someone came over with a video camera. "Let me see your

hands," he said. I held them out. They were trembling. I laughed nervously. The videographer said he comes nearly every weekend to tape people jumping, but he hadn't gathered the courage to try it himself. Yet.

Why tempt fate? There's something intriguing about experiencing that human vs. nature phenomenon.

According to the North American Bungee Association, 400,000 thrill seekers took the plunge in 1991, up from the 100,000 jumps recorded in 1990.

The sport originated with the native "land divers" of the New Hebrides in the Pacific Ocean, who tied vines to their ankles and made ceremonial leaps from 80-foot towers.

In the 1960s, a student group called the Oxford Dangerous Sports Club modernized bungee jumping and angered authorities when they hurled themselves from bridges.

In 1988, two New Zealanders got permission to set up the world's first bungee-jumping site at a bridge. Bridge jumping is illegal in America. So U.S. bungee pioneers, who dove from bridges spanning river gorges in the California Sierras, staged jumps at strange hours to evade local sheriffs.

Although there have been bungee deaths in France and New Zealand, none have been reported in the United States. A pair of California engineers opened a commercial (but unlicensed) jumping outfit near San Francisco in 1988.

Since then, the sport has really taken off. Daredevils can jump from balloons, bridges and cranes across the country. And they don't use vines anymore. They use giant rubber bands.

They've made a lot of improvements since the first few guys got killed.

Want to go? Turn the page.

Wishing

[Continued from Page 3] How long is it before the memories are gone, and I'm left with nothing? How long before the blackness absorbs even that and leaves me with...

with... what will I have then? I just realized something else. It doesn't matter. None of it matters. Nothing matters. I don't matter. I don't even exist.

One faded memory blurs into the rest, and none of it matters. Nothing.

I'm so confused. I feel so helpless. I need to cry. That's it. I need to cry.

I wish I could cry. I still feel alive. My mind seems vibrant with thoughts and questions and this can't be. Does my mind exist? If I am... then it doesn't. But I'm not. I can't be. Is this my hell, to go on for infinity with this confusion, these questions, wondering whether or not I'm... when I know I'm talking — but I'm not talking, am I? I am

dead, aren't I?

I don't know how this is gonna turn out.

I don't even know why I'm still thinking. The thoughts just keep echoing through this dark silence. But how can they echo if I'm not talking?

It doesn't matter. The words are only the dying thoughts of a dying boy. But I'm dead already. Aren't I?

I wish I knew.

If I could talk, maybe I could ask.

I wish I could talk. But who would I talk to? There's no one here.

It's like nothing exists, just these thoughts, this darkness, this feeling of being alone.

But wait. There are no thoughts. I can't think. I'm not really here, so I can't be alone. This is confusing. Or is it hell?

I wish I knew.

I... wait. I don't exist. Not anymore.

Never did. Not really.

You know, it's all kind of funny.

I wish I could laugh.

I wish I were alive.

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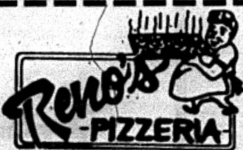
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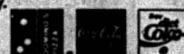
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